

NON-
CIRCULATING



1900
MICHIGAN STATE LIBRARY

mref
F 574.D2H35 1920 C.1 Early days in



2 0000 001 009 592

Early Days in Dearborn

BY

HENRY A. HAIGH

MICHIGAN STATE LIBRARY
LANSING



NOTE—The following address was delivered from very meager notes, and the request to furnish the manuscript could only be complied with from memory. The author regrets the resulting incompleteness and the imperfection of his effort.



P111
F
.574
.02
H35
1920
M.R.S.

1-636

Early Days in Dearborn

AN ADDRESS

Before the Dearborn Board of Commerce, April 20, 1920

By HENRY A. HAIGH

GENTLEMEN:

It is a pleasure, and I esteem it an honor, to be asked to address you on this occasion of your annual meeting, when you are assembled to celebrate your successful achievements and to recount the progress of this our wonderful town of Dearborn.

The growth of Dearborn during the past four or five years has been indeed phenomenal, even for a suburb of "Dynamic Detroit." This is, I suppose, due mainly to the activities of our distinguished townsman Henry Ford, because of his having located in this his boyhood home his tractor manufacturing plant, which, from present appearances, and the great economic importance of its product, seems destined to become one of the great industrial institutions of the country.

It is astounding to one who spent the happy days of his youth amid the rustic surroundings of this erstwhile quiet little sylvan hamlet, to behold its present prowess and prospective power, and to realize that it stands today a superlatively prosperous, industrial suburb of the greatest, most rapidly developed and most persistent, determined and "dynamic" manufacturing center in this great nation, if not in the world.

All this, though vastly gratifying, is perhaps not more gratefully interesting to us as citizens of Dearborn than is the equally patent fact, willingly conceded by all, that the peerless leader of the greatest industry in all this great industrial center is our own modest, unassuming, kindly, generous and well-beloved fellow townsman Henry Ford.

But, Mr. Chairman, proud as I justly am of this prosperous Dearborn of today, fortunate as I feel to have lived to witness the substantial beginning of this promised greatness of my native town, I am, nevertheless, glad that you have asked me to speak tonight about the Dearborn of earlier days.

Ah! those were good old days—those dear, departed, happy days of sleepy, care-free, little old Dearborn of long ago! They are dead and gone forever; the memory of them, once so cherished, seems fading into forgetfulness. And yet there was a tender grace about those days that are dead that may never come back again. And there was a wholesomeness and hopefulness, a friendliness and an undaunted confidence about them that make it useful for us to pause and contemplate their contrasts with the hurly-burly, rushing days of now. Because for real richness of life and that fineness and kindness of feeling which gives a mutual joyfulness and helpfulness, there was something in the simple, sturdy ooden time well worth emulating in this glorious but somewhat gilded, money-seeking present.

They were in many respects fairly typical pioneer days—quiet, simple, but very comfortable. Though the people were poor, and by comparison with the wealth abounding now, very poor, yet the poorest of us were rich in resource and contentment, and all were far, far removed from want or the remotest danger of want.

We were satisfied with what we had, and there were many essential things which are none too easily obtained by even the most forehanded now that were so abundant then that we took them as a matter of course—in fact they seemed almost free.

For instance, I am told that it is impossible to find a house to rent in this whole town. Rents are exorbitantly high for those fortunate enough to find places. Families are crowded two or three in a house, and people literally by thousands are forced to come here daily by trolley and auto from distant habitations where they have sought shelter. But in those old days there was room and to spare for everybody. Oh, there was so much room and space and land, and such unbounded opportunity for everybody! Everybody owned his home, or if, perchance, there was now and then one who wanted to rent, he could have any vacant house in town practically rent free. If he paid the taxes and kept the place in repair, that was all the owner usually cared to ask. And there were always a few old moss-covered habitations vacant, some remaining so till they became "haunted" and were abandoned to the bats and owls. There were two such old houses on my father's farm and one or two on the old Ten Eyck farm, fairly comfortable habitations, whose histories would be interesting, perhaps thrilling, if told today.

Then we had leisure in those halcyon days, a thing hard to find now! Though all worked, at times very hard, and at

certain seasons very long hours, still there always seemed to be plenty of time for everything, including ample time for talk; and everybody dearly loved a dish of conversation and indulged it to an extent that puts a blush upon our modern formalism and unceasing rush.

Though no one was rich, and money was scarce and wages were low, still the essentials of life were cheap, and while all practiced habitual economy, no one had to deny himself or his family anything needed for comfort. In fact not very much ready money was needed in those good old days, for if one hadn't the cash to pay, he could always get credit at Sloss's store, where he would be carried till fall, and then everybody always paid!

Let me tell you of other things now hard to get and high, but which seemed almost free then. Milk, butter and eggs were so abundant that we took them almost as a matter of course, a bounty of nature like air and water. Every family kept a cow, some had several. No cottage was so poor that it hadn't a shed behind it in which was a cow and a flock of chickens. The cows roamed the highways if the owner wished, or fed in the open fields. There was no outside demand for milk, as I recall, in Dearborn in the early days. It was all consumed at home, some of it made into butter and cheese and the balance fed to the pigs. If one's cow went dry, he borrowed milk from his neighbor till the cow came in. He paid for this in kind when the neighbor's cow went dry. He didn't pay in money. It didn't seem worth it. Today we pay 18 cents a quart for milk. The same is true of eggs. They were so abundant that the price went down in summer to 8 and 10 cents a dozen at Sloss's in trade. He sold them at the price he paid for them in trade. He didn't want two profits. Eggs now are 90 cents a dozen.

And potatoes! There never were such potatoes as grew in Dearborn in those days of virgin soil! They seemed free. They grew in such abundance that their price dropped often to 25 cents a bushel and sometimes lower. Every farmer raised them in quantity; every family had a patch. If one's bin ran low or his supply gave out in spring, he borrowed from his neighbor till the new crop came. If he forgot to return them, it was all right. They were hardly worth returning anyway. They cost \$5.00 a bushel now!

So I might go on tediously telling of other things, invaluable foodstuffs now, that take our money and our breath away to pay for them, that seemed almost as free as air and water then.

For, mark you, the virgin soil of Dearborn was fine and fertile. It raised best onions, biggest apples and most won-

derful watermelons that ever grew outdoors. And they always found a ready market in Detroit. The late William Nowlin tells in his story of "The Bark Covered House" about the first load of watermelons taken from Dearborn to Detroit, way back in 1833, when he made the trip with his father by ox team, taking three days for the journey and bringing melons so big that they brought readily a shilling apiece and produced sufficient ready money to furnish the family with supplies for the rest of that season.

For fully fifty years following this first crop of Dearborn watermelons, Dearborn continued to grow wonderful melons. But the fertile soil of Dearborn soon produced all the staple crops, and continues so to do to this day. I do not recall a single failure of crops in this township in the sixty years I have known it, nor do I recall a single case of complete failure on the part of any of the hardy pioneers who came to Dearborn in the early days. I know that most who came were comparatively poor, and we all know that the descendants of most of them who remain are now comparatively rich. While there was no wealth in the modern sense in Dearborn in the early days, but little ready money and only lowest wages (\$20 a month and board being the maximum for farm labor), I want to tell you that those meager conditions and those low wages afforded at that time, to those who really wanted to get on, a generous opportunity for advancement. And I think it safe to say that a larger proportion of those who worked even for those low wages took advantage of the opportunities then offered than are taking advantage of the big pay and possibly greater opportunities of today. I could weary you with innumerable instances of the successful results of that old-time, humble thrift. I could name you quite a number of determined men, who, starting at that \$20 a month, became the owners of prosperous farms, and I could cite you several well known instances where the descendants of those pioneers have, as a result of that early thrift, become wealthy citizens.

But the pursuit of wealth alone is rather sordid, and we gave little heed to it in those early days. We worked too long and hard to think very much about gain. An eight-hour day was then undreamt of. Eighteen hours was nearer its length in harvest time. And yet I do not know that any one was hurt by hard work in Dearborn in the early days. Anyway, we had a lot of fun.

I wish I had time to tell you of the wholesome, joy-giving pleasures that followed the round of the seasons in the olden days of Dearborn—of the fishing in the spring, the swimming

in the summer, the shooting in the fall, the picnics, the paring bees, the horseback riding, the socials, the dances and the pretty girls. Oh, there were always very pretty girls in Dearborn! Nor must I fail to mention the sleigh rides and the skating parties of those crisp, cold, snappy winters long ago.

There are not many here who can recall the craze for skating that swept over this country about the time of the Civil War. Going to Florida or California in winter was unheard of then. Everybody stayed at home and had the best fun of the year in winter time. Skating was in vogue. Dearborn caught the craze for it and everybody, young and old, skated, or attempted to. I remember that the late Mr. Gulley had, at a place on the Gulley Farm not half a mile from where we sit, a skating pond that he could flood, with a warmed pavilion at one side, and there were skating parties there all winter. At one time there was a grand fancy dress skaters' carnival, which every one attended, including Uncle Billy Ten Eyck, who had to be supported by two men, and even old Dr. Sweeney in a long fur coat came jauntily around a curve, when his feet slipped from under him and he fell down on the end of his backbone and had lumbago afterward.

Time limits the telling much about people and personalities that made up the interesting life of early Dearborn. But you can readily see that here was an environment inevitably destined to develop character. And it did bring out character of the choicest kind.

I recall, for instance, three rare old pioneer Justices of the Peace, who, without really knowing it, possessed great natural legal minds, and who for forty years or more settled the disputes of this community so justly and correctly that hardly an appeal was taken from their righteous judgments. These were Titus Dort, of whom we shall learn later, William Daly, whose sons and grandsons are honored citizens of our town, and Charles Brainard, the grandfather of Attorney Tom Long. Squire Brainard's native ability as a jurist appears in reinforced degree in this bright young townsman of ours, whom Mr. Justice Carpenter of our Supreme Court has characterized as one of the best lawyers in Michigan.

Many other interesting characters should be referred to, for their lives were really so useful as to merit all the time at my disposal, but I am forced to refer to but few of them and that only too briefly.

For first I must go back to the beginning and tell you that Dearborn to start with was greatly favored by nature in location and in soil formation, facts which cut significant figure in its subsequent life.

Dearborn is located, as you know, along the wooded banks of the winding River Rouge, sufficiently back from the flat country bordering the Detroit River to be high enough for thorough drainage. It has a heavy sub-soil of clay with a surface of as fine rich loam as any good farmer could wish. At a point near the center of the township, where the village now reposes and where the Arsenal was located, there begins the succession of low rolling sand hills known as the "hog backs," which stretch from there in wavering lines westerly across the state some two hundred miles to the Lake Michigan shore. These were of glacial origin, due to a lingering of the receding glacial mass and the consequent deposit of the worn and ground-up rock forming the sand of these picturesque low hills.

You can see that this slight elevation, surrounded by the flat, level lands, at times soggy and wet, which constituted much of the remainder of Wayne County, made Dearborn an attractive place from the beginning. And so the settlers found it the favorite haunt and abiding place of the abundant wild life then abounding everywhere; and that it was a location favored and frequented by the Indian tribes is evidenced by the numerous old Indian trails centering there and following along both banks of the Rouge, the latter so well worn that they became portions of early territorial highways and later of state roads stretching far across the state.

Here doubtless tarried Seminoles and Chippewas in their seasonal round for game. Here the brave Iroquois may have fought their ancient enemies, the Hurons and Algonquins. Also we may well believe here came the crafty chief Pontiac on the spring and autumn migrations from his winter home on Orchard Lake to his summer home on Bois Blanc Island, where the blue waters of the great strait merge into the shimmering waves of stately Lake Erie.

Pontiac was probably the ablest of all Indian strategists, equalled if at all only by his apt pupil Tecumseh. His great conspiracy, had it succeeded, would have changed the course of history. He was wise as well as cunning. He knew that Dearborn was a good place to stop.

He spent his winters at Orchard Lake, where game and fur-bearing animals were plentiful, and his summers on beautiful Bois Blanc, fanned by the cooling breezes of Lake Erie, where wild fowl and fish abounded. And in passing to and fro between these places he doubtless made Dearborn, the half-way point, his favored stopping place. With easy imagination, we may see his long lines of ponies wending their leisurely way along those well-worn Rouge trails, headed by the old chief

and followed by his braves with their squaws, papooses, dogs and crude equipment, turning in at twilight to the welcome dry and sandy knolls of Dearborn and pitching their tall tepees not far from the very spot on which we are tonight assembled.

This favored region appealed also to the early pioneers, and was the reason for the location here of our beloved village.

Dearborn was settled by as fine and hardy a race of pioneers as ever followed the western trail. They came mainly from the State of New York, though some came from Massachusetts and other eastern states.

They were impelled westward by the great migration which set in shortly after the war of 1812 and reached its culmination about 1837, when Michigan became a state of the American Union. A great stream of sturdy, hardworking home-seekers flowed steadily westward for nearly a quarter of a century, resulting in the settlement of the whole of the lower part of Michigan, a large part of northern Illinois and a goodly part of Wisconsin.

A large portion of these pioneers passed through Dearborn, and some of the best of them stopped here.

Dearborn was the first stopping point west of Detroit on the great territorial trail, later known as the "Chicago Road," running westerly to Fort Dearborn, Illinois, afterward called Chicago and now the second largest city in the new world.

The old Ten Eyck tavern, built in 1826, located about ten miles west of Detroit, stood directly opposite to where is now the stately entrance to Mr. Ford's estate. It was the first of a series of famous hostelries stretching across the state for the accommodation of this stream of pioneers. I well remember this famous old tavern, which was the scene of numerous and significant pioneer experiences, and I endeavored some years since to describe it in an article which was published in the Detroit Free Press, accompanied by a sketch which I made from memory, and also a sketch of the old Ten Eyck homestead, built in 1827, where Mr. Ford formerly resided, both of which I gave to Mr. Ford for safe keeping, as I fancied them the only pictures remaining of two of the earliest places in Dearborn.

But it was the location here by the United States Government of the Detroit Arsenal, so-called, that put Dearborn definitely and permanently on the map of Michigan.

This series of stately structures, built substantially of brick and stone around a hollow square, was an important thing in the early history of Dearborn. Its location was determined upon, I presume, during the administration of Andrew Jackson, and the structures were completed, I think, during the administration of President Tyler.

At that time the animosities leading to and following the Revolution and the war of 1812 had by no means subsided. Indeed, the old feelings again cropped out in the so-called "Patriot War," a farcical, and, as it now seems, rather silly fiasco, but which came near again bringing the two nations to blows in 1838.

In the early twenties, it became the policy of the War Department to locate garrisons and arsenals for the storage of arms, ordnance and ammunition at strategic points slightly in the rear of important frontier posts. Detroit with Fort Pontchartrain, Fort Shelby and later Fort Wayne, and with famous Fort Gratiot not far north, was one of the most important of all the frontier posts. This is evidenced by the significant fact that Detroit and its surrounding territory, including Dearborn, has been contended for and fought over on no less than five different occasions and has existed under five flags. It was first settled by the French, who came with Cadillac in 1701. It was taken from the French by the English in 1760. It passed to the United States at the close of the Revolutionary War. It was named after General Henry Dearborn, commander of the American forces at the outbreak of the war of 1812. It was surrendered to the English by the ill-fated General Hull, without firing a shot, at the outset of the war of 1812, and it was returned to the United States at the close of that rather useless conflict by the Treaty of Ghent, concluded in 1814 and ratified by our Senate in 1815. It will probably remain under the Stars and Stripes for some time to come. We have no foreign enemies who want it, and its people are content.

All these formidable forts referred to have faded away and their exact locations have almost been forgotten. Finding no use for them and knowing of no use for them in future; knowing also that the bonds of friendship existing across our Canadian border are stronger than any barriers of wood or stone, and realizing at last that the ties of blood existing between the two great branches of the English race render all these petty defenses useless, they have been allowed to sink back to earth and disappear.

But in 1820 it was thought wise to build an arsenal back of Fort Wayne and Detroit Arsenal was located at Dearborn, and completed about 1831 or '32.

This was the beginning of Dearborn's importance, though some of the old families were already here. The Ten Eycks were here, and the old Ten Eyck Tavern was doing a flourishing business in 1826. The town had been incorporated under the name of "Dearbornville"—later, I think with less euphony,

changed to Dearborn. The old Ten Eyck mansion was built in 1827. It was demolished and removed by Mr. Ford to make room for his entrance gates in 1918.

Conrad Ten Eyck, descended from a family of Dutch patroons, had come here from Albany and was a merchant in Detroit as early as 1819. Titus Dort had moved westward from the state of Vermont in 1824, and established the first brick yard in Detroit. In 1829 he came to Dearborn.

The Ten Eyck family was a large and very interesting one. Beside the two sons William and Charles, whom some of you must well remember, there were no less than four daughters, all beautiful women and popular. One married Daniel D. Tompkins, son of the Daniel D. Tompkins at one time Governor of New York and later Vice-President of the United States under President Monroe. "Dan Tompkins" was a "mighty hunter" and a famous character in Dearborn for many years, until his death a few years since. Mr. George Tompkins, our townsman, is his only son. Another daughter married David Sloss, our old time merchant, who successfully ran "Sloss's Store" in Dearborn for over half a century and made a fortune.

The Pardee family came to Dearborn in 1833 and located on a large farm just south of Dearborn. They were followed by the Putnam family and later the Nowlin family, who built the "Bark Covered House" and afterward the brick house still standing on the Nowlin Road. The Purdy family came about that time.

The Ruddiman family came in the spring of 1833 and located in the "Scotch Settlement" along with the Leslies and the Fords. William and Henry Ford, father and uncle of our present distinguished townsman Henry Ford, became thrifty and successful farmers in the Scotch Settlement and so continued to their deaths a few years since. Little did they dream when they plodded westward to this then unknown, backwoods settlement that among the bright and busy children soon to play around their modest thresholds was one destined to become a great national character—an inventor, manufacturer, financier, philosopher and philanthropist, who would challenge the attention of the world!

Following these early arrivals came a galaxy of settlers too numerous to name in full, but among them the Howards (a famous family), the Van Alstynes, the Dalys, the Gulleys, the Vromans, Ladds, Maxwells, Wallaces, Morhouses, Trowbridges, Clays, Beadlestons, Dr. Sweeny, Dr. Snow, Joseph Coon, John Black, J. W. Alexander, Abraham Lapham, and finally five Englishmen—Thomas Long, Joshua Jubb, Philip Elsey, Joseph

Ledbeter and my father Richard Haigh. The last named, however, was not fairly entitled to be called a "settler," for he purchased land already reclaimed, namely, the Howard Farm with its fine old colonial mansion built in 1833-4, and which stands today probably the best preserved of all the old pioneer places in Michigan. I would like to tell about Ed. Howe, a much loved later arrival; also about the Allens, VanRipers, Hiddens, Magoonahs and Coynes; but time forbids.

But it was the building of the Arsenal that brought Dearborn into prominence and made its early days seem important.

The construction of this considerable army post was commenced and carried to completion under the immediate charge of a bright young army officer, Lieutenant Joshua Howard, of the U. S. engineers. His work must have been appreciated by the War Department, for he remained in command of the new post for quite a number of years.

Recognizing the beauty of the location, he purchased lands adjoining the arsenal grounds, on which he built the house which later became and continued to be the home of my family for seventy years. In this colonial mansion Capt. Howard entertained his numerous friends, including many distinguished army officers, and from this old home his three beautiful daughters were married to three rising young residents of Detroit, who later became very prominent citizens, viz.: General Henry R. Mizner, a distinguished soldier of the Civil War, John Strong and Walter Ingersoll, both successful merchants, but all long since dead. Their descendants, or some of them, still reside in Detroit.

Lieutenant Howard rose to the rank of Colonel. Howard street, Detroit, I am told was named after him. He impressed his personality upon Dearborn decisively and cut an important figure in its early life. Hither he brought his two brothers—Cyrus Howard, later known as "Judge," and E. C. Howard, for many years Postmaster of Dearborn. Many of the Howard descendants still remain among Dearborn's good people.

Following Col. Howard, as commandants of the post, came a succession of army officers whose interesting families, all cultured people, helped much in the development of the social life of this then western community.

Major Stephen A. Webb succeeded Col. Howard, and I believe remained till 1845. He is remembered as the gallant officer who forcibly lifted the "Old Thompson Tavern" off from Government land and set it in the woods. This old "tavern" had squatted on the government reservation and was doing a good business. As the intruder would not move off, Maj. Webb was

obliged to use force, and in the squabble which ensued, the structure I think caught fire and burned down.

Following Maj. Webb, as commander of the post, came—in the order named—Capt. Collender, Capt. Abeel, Capt. Wilkins, Capt. Michaelis, Capt. Smyser, Col. Parker and Major Todd, the last named retiring about 1870, when the post was abandoned because Detroit and its vicinity was no longer regarded as frontier territory.

The presence in Dearborn for forty years of this important institution, with its soldiers and artizans and their officers, with interesting families, gave the life of the little town a sort of official aspect and relieved the early days of Dearborn of dreariness and that sense of remoteness characteristic of many pioneer settlements.

Here came the young officers from Fort Wayne, on horseback often, with wives or sweethearts, on pleasure bent, and some of these gallant fellows were destined for great deeds later. General U. S. Grant, America's greatest military hero, was a captain in the Fourth Infantry stationed at Fort Wayne in 1838, and doubtless often visited Dearborn in the early days.

During the Civil War the Arsenal was utilized as a recruiting and training station, and sometimes a regiment or a battery, or both, were in training there. I well remember a visit there of General William T. Sherman and members of his staff, about the close of the war period, and they came to my father's house, where General Ord, Department Commander, was stopping, and had refreshments there and spent the evening. It all seemed very exciting.

The real life of Dearborn, however, was not in the Arsenal, nor the taverns, nor on the teeming highway of pioneer travel. It was on the newly settled farms and among the old families I have referred to. I wish I could tell you some of the many interesting things about these fine old farmer folks. They and their kind were, and are, the bone and sinew of our nation, and they will be its steadfast protectors in time of stress and trouble.

I wish too that I might tell you of the early schools and churches of Dearborn, for both were good; and of the lives of the earnest preachers and priests that faithfully watched and worked for the welfare of their devoted flocks. Father Marker, long the efficient incumbent of the Catholic parish, endeared himself to all inhabitants and set a high mark for Father Sharpe, his worthy and energetic successor.

The Reverend William Dawe of the Methodist Church is the brilliant representative of a goodly line of parish preachers who have made the Ten Eyck Memorial Church the source and

center of wide-reaching Christian endeavor; while the Rev. Philip Schenk is the earnest, successful, cultured successor of a faithful line of laborers in the vineyard of Christ's Episcopal Church.

But I am admonished that my time is passing, and that I can detain you only to tell a word or two about certain characters of the early days of Dearborn, whose usefulness and continuing influence justify a concluding reference.

Titus Dort. I have referred to him before. He may be regarded as one of the most distinguished of our early settlers. His name appears frequently and always creditably in the history of the first decade of Michigan's statehood.

He was born in Vermont in 1806, and twenty years later we find him here engaged in the manufacture of the first bricks made in Michigan. Married to the daughter of Alanson Thomas, who had settled on the banks of the Rouge, he began making bricks in Dearborn as early as 1829. And they were good bricks. The U. S. Arsenal Buildings were built of them, and you know how sturdily they stood. The Haigh Homestead was built of them, and you know how securely it still stands.

Important as this first industrial effort proved, it was along other lines that Titus Dort rendered his greatest service to this new community.

In 1835 he was appointed Justice of the Peace by Governor Stevens T. Mason, and held that office under the Territorial Government and later by successive elections under the State Government for many years.

In 1836 he was elected a delegate from Wayne County to the first constitutional convention which met in Ann Arbor that year to consider a constitution for the proposed new state. A previously proposed constitution had a troublesome boundary line between Ohio and Michigan, which came near precipitating the famous, though farcical, "Toledo War." This boundary was not accepted by Congress and changes were proposed. While these changes were rejected by the Ann Arbor Convention, still by the patient work of Mr. Dort and others of like cautious temperament, a compromise was subsequently arrived at, all difficulties avoided, and Michigan received in lieu of the land contended for the entire Upper Peninsula of this great State—a veritable empire, as events proved, embracing more than seven hundred miles of shore line of Lake Superior and containing resources in iron, copper and other minerals, to say nothing of the timber and the lands of almost inconceivable value.

The persistence and poise of Titus Dort in this wise and worthy accomplishment showed him to be a statesman of no

mean order, and his abilities as such were put to good use for many years. He was elected a representative in the first State Legislature in 1838, and again in 1841 and in 1846. He was elected to the State Senate in 1848 and again in 1850. In 1849 he was Chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, and in collaboration with the late John C. Holmes and others, was instrumental in the organization of the State Agricultural Society, of which Hon. Jonathan Shearer of our neighboring village of Plymouth became the first President, and of the Executive Committee of which Mr. Dort was a member for several years. When it is remembered that this Society was instrumental in bringing about the legislation which developed the Michigan Agricultural College, the first of the great land grant colleges, of untold value to the country and the world, we may safely assert that Dearborn furnished important service in laying the sure foundations for the development of this great commonwealth.

But the Dort family like the Ford family was destined to make a transcendent contribution of vital energy to American progress through its second generation of pioneers. Josiah D. Dort, founder of the prosperous manufacturing firm of Dort, Durant & Company, out of which evolved by process of development the great General Motors Corporation, the largest aggregation of automobile industries in the world, was born in the town of Dearborn almost within a stone's throw of where we are now sitting.

Dallas Dort, as he was affectionately called, was a nephew of Titus Dort, and, unlike his famous compeer Henry Ford, sought a field for exercise of unbounded energy not in his native hamlet but in the nearby village of Flint. Here in course of time he became the head of the Durant-Dort Company, carriage manufacturers, turning out upwards of a hundred thousand vehicles a year.

When the automobile came along, this active firm took up its manufacture, and while I am not familiar with the details resulting in the transition from carriages to autos, I do know that the "Buick," "Dort," "Oakland" and other standard cars, with which we are all familiar, were successfully developed at Flint, and I do know that Mr. Dort and his associate Mr. W. C. Durant, the Treasurer of the Company, became great factors in this great evolution, the latter becoming a veritable genius for organization, not only in the manufacture of automobiles but for reorganization of companies engaged in such manufacture, showing himself to be a wonderful wizard at merger and development of combined interests—all of which, as stated,

resulted in the great General Motors Corporation, which owns the Cadillac, Buick, Oakland, Chevrolet and many other companies, and is the largest aggregation of automobile industry in the world.

Still it must be kept in mind, my fellow townsmen, that this Leviathan of production had to a large extent its natal germination in this, our little town. Dallas Dort is a product of Dearborn. Others helped and later may have led in this great evolution, but so far as Dallas Dort gave initiation and aid, that priceless energy came from Dearborn!

Now, my friends, I know that none of us can ever forget about our neighbor Henry Ford. It is needless for me to recount to you his early trials and struggles. We know them, and we know the wonderful undertakings and the transcendent achievements of this marvelous man. We know his abilities, and something of the aspirations and ambitions of his big and generous heart. We rejoice in his tremendous triumphs, and are proud of his position as a conspicuous American and world figure today.

But what I want you to remember is that he is a product of the early days of Dearborn; that he was born here, started here, stayed here, lives here, and is, and always will be, part and parcel of our town. Then also remembering that his great interests—autos, tractors, ships, railways, furnaces, mines, farms—and all his benefactions had their seed-thought origins in this town, and that his great industrial enterprises if added to those of the General Motors Corporation would constitute the most gigantic industry of the kind in the wide world, and that the product of it all is of such surpassing utility as to be working a world-wide economic revolution and changing, for the better I trust, the basic foundations of human life; and remembering also that all this stupefying realization had its germination and emanation in this erstwhile quiet little town of Dearborn in those early days that I have tried to tell about, you will see that my theme, however poorly presented, had in it elements of startling significance!

But glorious as is the reflection of these great industrial achievements upon the virility and latent capacity of early Dearborn, there were other phases of its early life equally deserving of our admiration. I have made no reference to the sweetest, tenderest and deepest emotions that fired and carried forward the hearts and souls of those early sturdy, steadfast pioneers. I refer to the indomitable determination, self-sacrifice, devotion and desire to help their offspring to better things than they had known, which actuated and impelled those early settlers.

The amount of hardship and hard work, of struggling toil, privation and apparent poverty, which they willingly went through for our poor sakes, may well inspire our appreciation and arouse our grateful sympathy.

And yet I am not sure those hardy homesteaders would accept much sympathy were they here to have it offered to them. They would probably tell us that they had just as good times subduing the wilderness as we have in possessing the fields their labor cleared.

I know it is a fashion of orators to exploit the privations of the pioneers and to invoke for them our sympathy and commiseration. But after all, is not that sympathy quite uncalled for and that commiseration mainly misapplied?

It is true that pioneers were limited in many of our modern commonplace appliances for comfort, and luxury in its present sense they did not know. But they had many things we do not think about, and some rare and priceless things that we do not have at all. They had the faith that comes from never knowing failure, and the confidence that comes from conquering early obstacles. They were a picked lot, too hardy to fear or feel privation and too hopeful ever to repine. They took hostage from the future, and knew the ransom would surely come in a generous and rich reward.

The poorest of them were not objects of pity, notwithstanding the sympathy our orators invoke.

Garfield, trudging as a barefoot boy upon the towpath of the Miami Canal, was winning wisdom and acquiring qualities which later made him a statesman and a leader of his people.

Grant, bareheaded boy and tanned, romping the rugged shores of the Ohio, was unconsciously building a simple, sturdy determination which made him victor in many battles.

Lincoln, sprawled prone upon the cheerless cabin floor, reading by the light of a burning pine knot, was absorbing, all unrealized, more than college or university could have given, and was acquiring from those austere surroundings qualities of mind and heart which later made his sturdy figure a beacon in the world's history, and gave him a force and beauty and simplicity of diction unsurpassed in the literature of any language of mankind.

No, not many pioneers appeal for pity, perhaps least of all those lucky ones who cast their lots in dear old Dearborn—long and hard and tirelessly as they labored.

Let us, nevertheless, keep them in grateful memory, and, as we behold about us all these abundant and bountiful results of their foresight and devotion, render to them continuous tribute of admiration, affection and respect.





Da

MICHIGAN
REFERENCE

